

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 696

By McLeary

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Colonel Otto Edward Melsa of Memphis for a lifetime of meritorious service.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, thousands of Tennesseans continue this time-honored tradition of volunteerism through service in the United States Marine Corps; and

WHEREAS, Colonel Otto Melsa served with courage and gallantry and deserves proper recognition for heroism both in the United States Marine Corps and through his service to society today; and

WHEREAS, born in Pittsburgh, Kansas, on August 17, 1923, Otto Edward Melsa graduated from Jackson High School in Tennessee in 1941; he was employed as a locomotive fireman for the Illinois Central Railroad (ICRR) in May of 1942 and was promoted to Locomotive Engineer in 1950; and

WHEREAS, Otto Melsa served with acumen and alacrity, earning the respect of his colleagues and his community; in 1986, he took a well deserved retirement from the ICRR in Memphis after 44 years of exemplary service; and

WHEREAS, Otto Melsa enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in July of 1942, serving for nearly three years in the South Pacific before being honorably discharged in November of 1945; and

WHEREAS, in 1947, he joined the Tennessee Army National Guard, serving with great bravery and ability, much of it in combat, before ending his career with the military at the rank of Colonel after 35 years of meritorious service; and

WHEREAS, Col. Melsa was recognized with many honors for his bravery and valor in a time of war, garnering the American Theater Ribbon, Asiatic-Pacific Ribbon, World War II Victory Medal, Navy Occupation Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Component Achievement medal, Philippines Liberation Medal, TnARNG Commendation Ribbon, Governor's Meritorious Unit Award, National Guard Service Ribbon, Volunteer Ribbon, Combat Action Ribbon, and a Presidential Unit Citation; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his professional and military achievements, Col. Melsa has compiled an astounding record of accomplishment as a tennis competitor; from 1986 until his retirement from tennis in 2001, he accumulated a total of 128 Senior Olympic medals: 58 Gold; 44 Silver; and 26 Bronze medals; and

WHEREAS, his athletic talents enabled him to have tremendous success in other sports as well, including softball, basketball, track, and football, and he spent ten years as a player and manager of semi-pro baseball; and

WHEREAS, Col. Otto Melsa is an extremely well-traveled individual as well, having visited many countries all over the world, including Israel, where he was immersed in the Jordan River; Mexico; Egypt; Switzerland; Germany; Austria; Greece; France; Italy; and Russia; and

WHEREAS, a public-spirited citizen of the highest order, Col. Otto Melsa has served as a praiseworthy and talented volunteer in many capacities, including as a railroad safety consultant, a member of the national defense, and ten years as the Director of Civil Defense for the Memphis city/county government; and

WHEREAS, Col. Otto Melsa is a charter member of the Northside United Methodist Church in Jackson, and for many years has been an active and devout member of Mullins United Methodist Church in Memphis, where he served as a Sunday School teacher from 1987 to 1992; and

WHEREAS, his noteworthy accomplishments aside, Col. Melsa and his wife are fortunate to have been blessed with two children, five grandchildren, and fourteen great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, with respect to his talents and his many accomplishments, Col. Melsa remains humble, and he is most thankful to the Lord for all of life's great blessings; and

WHEREAS, possessing estimable proficiency in all of his undertakings, Col. Melsa provides an excellent example of the tremendous success that can be achieved by those Tennesseans who possess the determination, drive, and dedication to take full advantage of their innate talents; and

WHEREAS, Col. Otto Melsa performed his duties with the utmost skill, dedication and professionalism; his service can only be categorized as outstanding; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Retired Colonel Otto Edward Melsa of Memphis for meritorious service to both his profession as a railroad engineer and to the military in the United States Marine Corps, offer our thanks for the honor which he has brought to this State, and extend to him our best wishes for every continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.